

1 THE HONORABLE JOHN C. COUGHENOUR  
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7 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
8 WESTERN DISTRICT OF WASHINGTON  
9 AT SEATTLE

10 UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

11 Plaintiff,

12 v.

13 STEPHEN W. NOEL,

14 Defendant.

CASE NO. CR20-0034-JCC

ORDER

15 This matter comes before the Court on Defendant Stephen Noel's unopposed motion to  
16 proceed with a guilty plea hearing by video conference (Dkt. No. 19). Having thoroughly  
17 considered the motion and the relevant record, the Court hereby GRANTS the motion for the  
18 reasons explained herein.

19 **I. BACKGROUND**

20 Mr. Noel has been charged with possessing methamphetamine with intent to distribute,  
21 possessing a firearm in furtherance of a drug trafficking crime, and being a felon in possession of  
22 a firearm. (Dkt. No. 1 at 1–3.) He would like to plead guilty and proceed with the plea hearing by  
23 video conference. (Dkt. No. 19.)

24 **II. DISCUSSION**

25 Delaying Mr. Noel's plea hearing would cause serious harm to the interests of  
26 justice. *See* W.D. Wash. General Orders 04-20, 09-20, 14-20, 17-20, 06-21. Under General Order

1 04-21, in-person proceedings will not resume until May 3, 2021, and even then, the Court will be  
2 strictly limiting the number of people who can attend those proceedings. *See* W.D. Wash.  
3 General Order 04-21 at 2. Delaying Mr. Noel's plea hearing and, as a consequence, his  
4 sentencing, by several weeks would cause serious harm to the interests of justice because Mr.  
5 Noel has a strong interest in the speedy resolution of this matter now that he has decided to plead  
6 guilty. In addition, Mr. Noel's counsel represents that he has a serious medical condition that the  
7 Bureau of Prisons cannot or will not address until he is sentenced. (Dkt. No. 19 at 2.) The  
8 Government does not oppose proceeding by video. (*See* Dkt. No. 19 at 1.)

9 **III. CONCLUSION**

10 For the foregoing reasons, the Court GRANTS Defendant Stephen Noel's motion to  
11 proceed with a guilty plea by video conference (Dkt. No. 19) and ORDERS that Mr. Noel's plea  
12 hearing be scheduled before a Magistrate Judge as soon as practicable and be conducted by video  
13 conference.

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15 DATED this 8th day of April 2021.

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John C. Coughenour  
UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE